

Bellaire High School Study Abroad Program Overview

Major Accomplishments:

- Approximately 600 students have studied abroad since 2000.
- Since 2018, Bellaire High School students have received a quarter of a million dollars in scholarship funds to study abroad.
- We have had students study on six continents.
- Our campus has won the AFS-USA Top 75 Campus Award of Recognition for our long-term commitment to study abroad.
- Bellaire has been a CIEE Global Navigator School for the past four years after the Study Abroad Coordinator applied for the status; our students are eligible for additional funding because of this designation. We won the Gold School Award from them in 2019.
- The Study Abroad Coordinator has completed a year-long fellowship with Harvard University's Davis Center for Eurasian Studies on incorporating global mindedness into the curriculum and has been nominated for the AFS (an affiliate of the U.S. Department of State) Global Educator of the Year Award. The Study Abroad Coordinator has served on EF's DEIB committee to examine ways that study abroad can be more inclusive and justice-oriented.

Study Abroad Coordinator Role and Responsibilities:

Overview: Facilitate opportunities for students to travel for a range of durations to different locations through a variety of partner organizations to expose students to different cultures and support them in developing a global mindset and 21st century skills.

- EF Tours
 - HISD has an MOU with EF Tours as the exclusive provider for student educational tours abroad. They provide district students with additional scholarships as well as funding for earning college credit. HISD teachers are also eligible for scholarships to earn graduate credit as part of the travel experience.
 - Since 2000, Bellaire has had 455 travelers participate in EF Tours.
 - These tours also allow our faculty members to gain global experience; some of our teachers have had their first experience out of the United States as chaperones on our trips and have been able to use what they have learned to support their curriculum in their classrooms.
 - We have a set of policies and procedures that we use to help trips run safely and sustainably.
 - Our Spring Break tours are open to the entire campus and function as a way for us to promote broad cultural exchange and inculcate the values of open-mindedness and acceptance through exposure to different people and places around the world.
 - In planning for one of these tours, the Study Abroad Coordinator always asks for the principal's permission and support before beginning anything formal.
 - The Study Abroad Coordinator is mindful of other study abroad opportunities and programs across campus ensures they do not overlap in any way.
 - The Study Abroad Coordinator attempts to "fill a bus" – that is, gather a group of around 40 so that the trip can be exclusively for Bellaire High School (instead of being paired with another school, sometimes from across the country).
 - The Study Abroad Coordinator helps to promote some more specialized tours for specific disciplines (Arts, STEM, World Languages) to create more opportunities for students to have international experiences.
 - The Study Abroad Coordinator will suggest teachers who would be safe and effective group leaders. The Study Abroad Coordinator uses judgment in recommendations about who should lead a tour given teachers' level of commitment to safety and relationships with students.

- Before the Study Abroad Coordinator recommends another teacher as a group leader to the principal, the Study Abroad Coordinator goes over our policies and procedures to make sure that they feel like they can operate within those boundaries.
 - The Study Abroad Coordinator keeps track of all of the trips that are running and attempts to make sure that times and destinations do not overlap so that we can allow as many students as possible to have the opportunity to go abroad.
 - Over the past decade, teachers who have led a tour have always waited until returning from their first one to plan later ones to make sure that the role is a good fit.
- On these tours, safety is our top priority. The Study Abroad Coordinator develops close relationships with their leadership to ask them to prioritize our students' interests.
- The Study Abroad Coordinator advocates for equity of access and experience on these tours and works to constantly improve the educational component in a way that is inclusive.
- Students are able to earn college credit at a very low cost for their reflection on their learning. Teachers are also able to earn graduate credit in the same way.
- CIEE
 - This is a non-profit organization that offers significant scholarships to students who would otherwise not be able to afford to travel.
 - Students do not travel as a Bellaire High School group; instead, they meet up with students from across the United States in their country of study with teachers as their chaperones.
 - Students spend three to four weeks abroad over the summer in an intensive program. There are three major types of programs: language, academic disciplines, and service/leadership. Most of the scholarship money is allotted to language programs. This particularly supports Bellaire's World Languages Magnet Program; students who participate in one of those programs learning a language in the local context usually make one year of growth and are potentially able to move to a more advanced level (and could therefore increase our AP numbers).
 - The Study Abroad Coordinator shares information by hosting interest sessions for students during Cardinal Hour and organizing a Study Abroad Scholarship Night.
 - The Study Abroad Coordinator supports students in completing their applications for this program, particularly their scholarships.
 - The Study Abroad Coordinator encourages our faculty members to apply to be chaperones for this program, and we have had two teachers and an administrator who have done so.
- AFS
 - AFS supports exchange students in coming to the U.S. and Bellaire High School and has done so for many years.
 - They often ask for help in locating host families, so the Study Abroad Coordinator will put an announcement in the eNews and ask around to try to find placements.
 - The Study Abroad Coordinator supports our exchange students and helps them find their place in our big campus.
 - AFS also administers two other programs that our students sometimes take advantage of:
 - NSLI-Y (the National Security Language Initiative for Youth): This is a program partially administered by the U.S. Department of State to help students develop proficiency in languages that are of critical national security importance. It's an intensive summer program focused on developing language skills. It is my goal to expand participation in this program among Bellaire students, especially since it would benefit our World Languages Department.
 - The Congress-Bundestag Youth Exchange is a prestigious, merit-based scholarship for a student to spend an entire year in Germany. Over the past decade, we have had students win this award three times.
 - AFS also offers professional development opportunities for teachers with the United Nations; the Study Abroad Coordinator has nominated two teachers who have gone on to successfully participate in this.

- AFS has asked Bellaire about doing some virtual exchanges, and some of our teachers would make fantastic use of that opportunity for their students to be able to connect with teenagers from around the world without having to leave the country.
- Greenheart Travel
 - Greenheart Travel also brings students to the United States for exchanges, although the program has not been as active at Bellaire as AFS has.
- Rotary
 - The West U Rotary Club offers students an opportunity to go abroad for an entire year at very low cost due to the fact that everyone involved in the organization is a volunteer who opens their home to young people because they believe in the mission of intercultural exchange.
 - This is a particularly strong opportunity for students to do after their senior year as a “gap year.”
 - Rotary also sometimes seeks to place exchange students in families here at Bellaire, and the Study Abroad Coordinator tries to help them locate homes that would be a good fit.
 - The Study Abroad Coordinator hosts informational sessions for students about the program and supports them in their applications.
 - The Study Abroad Coordinator talks with parents who have questions about how the program works.
- AMIGOS
 - Although this organization has a national reach, it is based here in Houston. They organize trips for students to go to Latin America and complete service, often in more rural communities. It has a particular focus on character development and Spanish language acquisition.
 - They offer financial assistance for students who are not able to afford the costs.
 - AMIGOS also has a special partnership with HISD.
 - The Study Abroad Coordinator hosts informational sessions for students about the program and supports them in their applications.
- The Puranik Foundation
 - This is a local Houston non-profit organization that is connected to an oil company.
 - Their Impact India program is a week-long opportunity for students to travel to the organization’s school in Pune, India to connect with local students, learn about Indian culture, and perform service.
 - The Puranik Foundation has a special partnership with HISD.
 - They offer scholarships for HISD students who are not able to afford the costs of the program.
 - The Study Abroad Coordinator hosts informational sessions for students about the program and supports them in their applications.
- The British-American Foundation of Texas
 - This local organization offers scholarships to low-income juniors to go on a study tour of England over the summer.
 - The Study Abroad Coordinator works to identify students who might fit the criteria and be interested and support them in writing their applications.

Addendum Based on October 20, 2023 Meeting:

- All trips will be with EF Tours, the Houston ISD’s student travel provider. Since this time, [Houston ISD has announced an even larger partnership with that organization](#) with the direction and support of the Superintendent, taking hundreds more HISD students on trips both internationally and domestically.
- There is a single Study Abroad Coordinator for the campus; all trips must be coordinated through that role to prevent overlap and allow as many students as possible the opportunity to travel.